Teen And Up Audiences

No Archive Warnings Apply

Don't Hug Me I'm Scared (Webseries)

Duck/Red Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)

Red Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Yellow Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Duck (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)

Hurt/Comfort
Implied/Referenced Child Abuse
Injury Recovery
Aftermath of Torture
Adoption
Dark Past
Duck and Red Guy are Yellow Guy's Parents (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Protectiveness
Use of Fanon Names (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Child Yellow Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Fluff
English

Raised by a Monster

Peepasaurus

Summary:

What happens when a monster finds a lost child?

Chapter 1 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/129326128)

The crescent moon left a silver hue on the dark streets below. Harry walked beneath the streetlights with his takeout in hand. He turned a corner and jumped when he heard a scream. A stranger stood a few feet away from him, yelling in terror at Harry's large menacing figure.

Harry stepped back in surprise and naturally slouched his posture, trying to come off as less scary. He was used to other creatures being frightened of his monstrous appearance, but it was still unnerving every time it happened.

The stranger now looked guilty as they realized there was no threat and they quickly stated, "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to-"

"It's alright, mate," Harry immediately offered, not needing another excuse as to why everyone found him threatening. "We spooked each other." He then hurried to continue on his way home, feeling embarrassed and ashamed for deciding to venture out in the dark when it terrified everyone so much.

When Harry got to his townhouse, he quickly fumbled with his keys before he heard a familiar voice call from behind him.

"Hey, you!"

Harry sighed at the voice and turned around on his front step to sure enough see his neighbor, Robin, with his hands on his hips. Robin looked like he had just woken up, as he was in his pajamas. The bird monster narrowed his eyes and said, "Stop going through my trash, you freak!"

He hesitated as he processed that his neighbor had just walked outside to yell at Harry in the middle of the night. He finally blinked and said, “I’m not going through your trash.”

“I know you are!” Robin pointed at him accusingly. “You’re the culprit for all the shit I have to deal with! You have the TV on too late at night, which I can hear through the walls, and it messes with my beauty sleep! Now I wake up in the night to you making a ruckus in the bin!” He gestured dramatically to the metal trash can in front of his townhouse, which sat right next to Harry’s.

“Mate, what would I do with a bunch of garbage?” Harry rolled his eyes. “It’s probably just the cats.”

“Likely answer, but that’s not the truth, is it? If you don’t stop messing with my sleep, the next time I come out here won’t be so pretty.” He lifted his small fists aggressively. “Don’t think I won’t use these!”

If there was anyone who wasn’t unreasonably scared of Harry, it was Robin. Too bad the bird constantly wanted to kick his ass.

Harry sighed before he said, “I’ll try not to play the TV so loud at night. And for real mate, I’m not going through your bin.”

Robin pointed at his own eyes before he pointed at Harry. “I’m watching you,” he warned. Then he turned on his heels and walked into his own townhouse. Harry was left on his front steps, still trying to process what just happened.

As he turned to finally enter his home, he jumped in place when he heard a metal clang. Harry whirled around to realize that he had heard the trash bins move, even though they were still at the moment. His shoulders dropped as he sighed. If only Robin had been out now. He could have seen that it wasn’t him making the noise.

Harry slowly approached the trash bins, wanting to see the cats responsible for making his neighbor yell at him. He almost dropped his takeout in surprise when he came around to the other side of the bin to see a child.

The kid was sitting against the bin, staring up at Harry in terror with wide eyes. He was small and thin, with fluffy blue hair and only wore an old large t-shirt to cover himself. Harry noticed that the kid had visible cuts and bruises, and he was shaking violently as he remained still against the trash bin.

Harry immediately backed away to not scare the child any more. The poor thing looked so frail and thin. He looked down at his takeout and didn’t hesitate to offer it up. “You hungry?” he asked in the softest voice possible. “I have food. It’s stir fry. Do you have any allergies?”

He felt so stupid as he talked, and the child just continued to stare at him fearfully. He wasn’t sure if the kid could even speak. Harry decided to just open the takeout and back away, so that the kid could be closer to the food than himself. He also crouched down to make himself as small as possible.

The kid kept glancing between Harry and the food before he bolted for the takeout and brought it back to his space by the trash bin. He used the plastic utensil to eat as quickly as possible, as if he hadn’t eaten in days.

Harry frowned as he watched the kid wolf his food down. “Don’t eat too fast,” he warned. “You might get sick.”

The kid stared at him for a few seconds before he went back to eating, this time a bit more slowly. He actually managed to chew some between bites.

Harry couldn’t help but look at the child’s cuts, some of which were still bleeding. “Is it okay if I clean your wounds? We need to stop the bleeding.”

The kid didn’t react to what he said. He just kept eating, as if he could only focus on one thing at a time.

He hesitated before he stood and hurried towards his house, being sure to keep a safe distance from the child. “Stay here,” he hastily said before he dashed inside.

Harry went through his medicine cabinet, grabbing bandages, cloth, and ointment before running back outside. He was thankful to see that the child hadn’t moved.

The kid stopped eating and stared up at the approaching figure, once again shaking with fear. He didn’t move though, as if he were forcing himself to trust this stranger against his fearful instincts. Harry’s heart sank, feeling terrible for what this poor kid was having to go through.

He crouched down next to the child and said, “I’m going to clean your wounds, now. This might hurt just a bit.” Then he placed a damp cloth down on one of his bleeding scrapes. The kid flinched from the contact before remaining as still as possible, aside from his constant slight trembling.

Harry went to work cleaning and bandaging all of the wounds he could see, asking the kid if anything hurt too much throughout. The kid would only reply by shaking his head.

Once he was done wrapping up the last cut, he tried to think of what was the next best action. “Are you lost?” he asked the kid. “Do you need me to call your parents?”

“No!” The kid yelled the word frantically before he covered his mouth with his hands and trembled more severely. He looked terrified to have spoken a word.

“Hey, it’s okay.” Harry tried reaching out, but the kid flinched and he immediately took his hand away. “We won’t call anyone, then. How about we go inside?” He knew it wasn’t good to ask that as he said it, but he was running out of

options. This kid had every right not to trust a stranger like himself.

The kid only nodded, making his stomach turn sour and his shoulders tense up. He didn't want to think about what would have happened if the kid put his trust in a different stranger. The kid kept the hold on his takeout and began to follow Harry towards his house. At this point, all that Harry could think was that he needed to help this kid before things got worse.

Once they were inside, Harry let the kid keep eating at the kitchen table before he was full. As Harry put the rest of the food in the fridge, the kid's breathing suddenly became uneven as he began crying and shaking in his seat.

"Oh no, don't cry." Harry stood there hesitantly, not sure what to do at all. He quickly turned on the TV and kept it on the lowest volume to not wake Robin. "You wanna watch the telly?"

The kid sniffed as he watched the screen, growing calmer as he became distracted. Harry led the kid to the couch so that he could sit comfortably and then sat next to him. They watched the quiet TV for a while, and Harry leaned against the end of the couch as he grew tired. Suddenly, his eyes flung open when he felt something touching his side. He gazed down to see that the child had fallen asleep and was leaning against him for support.

Harry smiled, feeling a warmth in his heart before he helped the sleeping child lay down on the couch and then laid some extra blankets on top of him. He sat in the nearby chair and watched the child sleep before he drifted off in his own seat.

He would figure out what to do tomorrow.

Chapter 2 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/129660778)

Harry woke in an awkward slumped position in his seat, wondering why he wasn't currently in bed. Then he gazed over at the couch and everything from last night started sinking in again.

The boy was still sleeping on the couch, with his head barely peeking out from under the blankets. Harry sighed, still unsure of what he was going to do. He forced himself to stand so that he could at least make breakfast.

The sound of eggs sizzling in the pan was enough to wake the child. He woke with a start and sat up on the couch while darting his eyes around and hyperventilating.

"Woah, kid." Harry dashed from the kitchen to make sure that he was okay. When the boy saw him approach, he scrambled to the floor and crawled backwards away from Harry, as if the monster were about to kill him. He stared up with wide terrified eyes and his chest rose and fell rapidly.

Harry gritted his teeth anxiously. He remained in place, afraid that approaching the kid might make him die of a heart attack. "It's okay," he said in a voice that he wished sounded more comforting. "I'm not going to hurt you, I promise. Remember last night? I helped clean your wounds."

The kid's breathing began to slow and some recognition flickered in his eyes. His trembling eased away as he seemed to process where he was.

He glanced back towards the kitchen. "You want some eggs?" he asked the child.

The boy could only nod in response. He wasn't much for speaking. Maybe he was still too afraid to.

Harry finished preparing the eggs and he gave a plate to himself and the child, who sat across from him at the table. The kid immediately started eating too quickly, and Harry had to remind him to slow down. He was relieved to see the kid once again heed his advice.

As they ate silently together, Harry decided to at least try at getting the child to speak. "So," he began awkwardly, "What's your name, kid?"

The child hesitated as he chewed his breakfast before he swallowed and said quietly, "David."

Harry smiled beneath his fur, so excited to see the child speak to him without trembling in fear. Getting a name out of him was at least a start to figuring out what was going on. "Alright, David," he said gently. "I'm Harry. Can you tell me where you're from?"

David tensely held his fork against his plate and shook his head violently. "I can't go back," his voice rasped as he was on the verge of tears. "Please don't make me go back."

"Okay." Harry said the word quickly in hopes to prevent David from falling apart. He placed his hand outstretched on the table as a comforting gesture. David lightly flinched from the movement, but when he saw the hand remain motionless on the table, he carefully placed his own hand in the monster's large paw. He was so tiny compared to Harry. Not only that, but he also still looked too sickly and thin. Harry knew that it would take a lot more than two complete meals to help the boy fully recover from a state like this.

David slightly smiled as he was able to make physical contact with Harry, and Harry felt his little hand squeeze his paw for support. Harry glanced up from their hands to see that David was wiping a few tears from his eyes. "I'll make sure

that no one hurts you or takes you away," he promised the child. "But I need to know what's going on, so that I can help you."

The kid's lip trembled and the tears started streaming down his face more rapidly. "I can't-" he croaked painfully. He shook as he struggled to breathe and put his hands up to cover his eyes. "I can't, I can't, I-" He cut himself off with his own trembling cries.

Harry worriedly watched as the crying grew worse and he fidgeted in his seat uselessly. "Is it okay if I come closer?" he asked, not sure what else he could do.

David only nodded in response as he continued to cry and whimper between struggling to breathe. Harry crouched next to the boy's chair and then reached out to put a hand on his back as a soothing gesture. When David leaned into the touch, Harry tried briefly holding the child in a hug. Before he could let go, he felt David cling onto his fur, and a dampness formed as he cried into Harry's shoulder.

Harry continued to hug him, gently rubbing his back until the sobbing died down to slow trembling breaths. David pulled away and gazed up at Harry with slightly red eyes and a soft change in his expression. Despite how somber he looked, he didn't seem so fearful anymore. "Thank you," he whispered.

"You don't need to thank me, kid." Harry got up to wash their dishes. As he stood in front of the sink, he felt something grab his leg. He looked down to see that David had gotten up to hug him again, burying his face into his soft fur. Harry couldn't help but grin before he glanced at the telephone. He sighed, realizing that the only next action would be to call the authorities.

—

"Is it alright if I pick you up?"

David nodded and lifted his arms, ready to be held.

Since Harry had given the child a hug to calm him down, the kid couldn't get enough hugs from the monster. While Harry talked to the police on the phone, David continued hugging his leg with a tight grip, as if he could lose Harry if he let go. The idea that he could hurt David seemed to be out of his head now.

The police were expecting Harry to bring the child to the station so that they could file a report and figure out who would be best to take the boy from here. Harry felt relieved that David was soon going to be safe and taken care of.

He carried David out of his townhouse and to his car. David clung to the monster for protection and once again buried his face into Harry's fur. Harry patted his back as a comforting gesture before he had to put him down in the back seat of his car.

As David was placed into his seat, he gazed up with wide curious eyes. He trusted Harry completely as he was buckled into his seat. Harry could only use the bottom seatbelt that went over his lap, as he was too short for the top one. He grimaced as he realized that the kid needed a booster seat. He would just have to be careful driving to the station.

David gave the car a mildly concerned look. "Where are we going?" he asked worriedly.

"There's people that can help us," Harry explained. "They're going to keep you safe." He ruffled the boy's blue hair, which caused David to smile as he was comforted by the feeling. Harry also grinned, loving how easy it was now to help the kid feel better. He never knew that someone so small and frail could look at him with such a warm and trustful expression, especially after knowing him for less than a day.

Harry drove through the small town towards the police station. He kept glancing into his rearview mirror to see David gazing at the window with a content look on his face. As they got closer to the station, David grew more relaxed in his seat as he leaned his head back and his eyes got droopier.

When Harry parked the car, David straightened his posture as he was on full alert again. He raised his arms expectantly when the monster unbuckled his seatbelt, and Harry easily lifted the child and walked into the station.

David hid his face from the people in the station, and Harry could feel the small body that clung to him tremble slightly. He tried rubbing David's back to soothe him as he approached the front desk.

After a brief talk with the receptionist, they led him to one of the offices where an anthropomorphized wooden police baton sat behind a desk. He didn't have a visible mouth, but he had a bushy mustache that moved when he talked.

He glanced up from his papers when Harry took a seat with David in his lap, who buried his face into Harry's chest to hide from the stranger. "So," the baton creature said, "This kid hasn't told you anything other than that his name is David?"

"Yeah, um…" Harry looked at the child in his lap hesitantly. "He hasn't been able to say anything about his past, probably because it's so traumatic. He's been doing a lot better this morning with me than last night, so he might be able to talk more in the future."

"Yes, you said that last night the child was afraid to be near you." He looked at how David held on to him before meeting eye contact with Harry. "What's changed?"

"Uh…" He frowned as he tried to figure out the right answer. "I gave him a hug."

The baton's mustache shook as he laughed. "No offense, but if a big scary monster like yourself tried to give me a hug out of nowhere, I would scream."

Harry blinked. "No, that's definitely offensive."

"We have someone here from our child protection services," the baton continued, ignoring his last statement. "She might be able to get more information out of David than you have. She'll also be able to figure out where David should go from here."

The woman with child protection services was brought into the office and she crouched next to Harry's seat. She tried to make eye contact with David, but he used Harry as protection to keep his face hidden.

"Uh, David," Harry said awkwardly, trying to help the situation. "This lady's here to help."

She smiled at Harry thankfully while David moved his head slightly to reveal his face to her. "Hey, David," she said softly. "How are you feeling?"

David didn't reply. He just continued to watch her. When she tried to scoot a bit closer, Harry felt the boy's grip on him tighten and he heard him whimper, "Don't."

She frowned at that. "You're scared of me?" she asked gently. When David nodded, she added, "Who else are you scared of?"

"Everyone," he mumbled.

"Are you scared of Harry?"

David paused before he shook his head.

The woman thought for a moment before she pulled the officer out of the room and they talked for a while in the hallway, their voices muffled by the closed door. Harry's gut tightened as he waited with only his thoughts and a terrified child to distract him. He wished that interaction had gone better. It was going to be difficult for the kid to get help if he didn't trust anyone.

The child protection service lady returned with the officer, and they both took seats behind the desk to face Harry. The woman placed her hands on the table and began slowly, "Listen, I think it would be best if you continued to take care of David for the time being."

Harry felt himself freeze up. He didn't know how to respond. The woman kept talking.

"Based on the report, our best guess is that David ran away from an abusive household before he found you. I don't think there was ever a person in this kid's life who didn't hurt him before you. You might think that what you did last night and this morning to help him wasn't much, but to him that was everything. You're the only person he trusts right now. We think he'll do a lot better recovering if he has a stable home life with someone that he trusts."

Harry continued to stare blankly in return, so the woman added, "Now, I understand that you might feel unprepared to take care of this child. Let me remind you that it would just be temporary so that he can make some progress in the recovery process. The government will fund you to provide everything you need to temporarily foster David."

Finally, Harry got enough control of himself to shake his head. "Okay, that's great and all, but what am I actually supposed to do?" There was a hint of panic in his voice as he processed more of what this meant. "I have no experience with children, and this kid needs serious help. Surely he'd be better off with people that know what they're doing."

"We can give you all the resources that you need, and I'll help you every step of the way." The woman leaned forward in her seat and said, "But we're not forcing you to do anything. You can decline, and we'll take David from here. We would at least ask that you regularly visit us to establish a schedule where he feels safe with another person."

Harry dared to glance at the child in his lap. The kid looked up at him with pleading eyes and he felt his heart pang with guilt. David had a tight grip on his fur, refusing to let go. He held David closely in another hug, not really wanting to let go of him either.

"Alright," he replied with a deep breath. "I'll foster him for the time being."

The woman smiled and she immediately started showing him forms and binders that he would need. During this, the officer wrote up a note and handed it to the monster. It read, "If David tells you anything that could relate to his case, let us know immediately." Harry looked up from the note and nodded.

As Harry continued talking with the child protection services, David cuddled against the monster, grinning blissfully.

Chapter 3 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/130050577)

From the police station, Harry was sent straight to a pediatrician to assess David's health. He held the boy's hand the whole time, so that he could be brave enough to be checked over by the nurses and doctor. It was a struggle to keep David still and to have him trust the medical professionals, but they eventually got through the entire check-up.

All of the kid's current wounds were minor as they had time to heal. David's physical health for the most part would be alright as long as he could gain some weight. Harry was given some specific instructions on how to help the kid get to a

more healthy weight before they left for the several stores Harry would need to visit to complete everything on his lists. In a week Harry was supposed to meet with the child protection services again with a psychiatrist who could more accurately evaluate David's mental health.

The first thing Harry bought was a booster seat so that David could ride in the back of the car safely. In public spaces, David only wanted to hide his face in the monster's fur to avoid strangers. It made shopping around difficult. Harry decided to buy a blanket next, which the kid could wrap around himself and use it to hide while he pushed David around in a cart. He was relieved to see David content with hiding within the blanket while he shopped around. From time to time David would peek his head out and smile before he spotted somebody else and quickly hid his face again. People would give Harry odd looks when they saw him pushing a mysterious small figure under a blanket around in a cart, but nobody thankfully said anything. The monster despised the unwanted attention, and he repeatedly had to take deep breaths and convince himself that he just had to get through the day.

Harry felt like he had been to every store in town before they finally made it to the last place on his list. It had been a long day of trying to figure out what clothes would fit David and how many child safety locks he would need. There were several times where Harry felt too overwhelmed, but then he would see the kid smile at him, which somehow convinced him that things would be alright.

David once again was covered by his blanket as Harry pushed him in the shopping cart into the grocery store. Harry glanced at the list of recommendations both by the child protection services and the pediatrician. He sighed before doing his best to go through the aisles as quickly as possible.

He did know his way around the grocery much more than previous stores he had shopped in today, so he was making good progress before check-out. However, he was suddenly stumped as he kept going up and down aisles looking for the last thing on his list: peanut butter.

"Am I stupid?" he whispered madly to himself as he passed through another aisle to come up empty handed. He never bought peanut butter for himself, but he never would have thought finding something so basic would be this hard. The exhaustion of the long shopping day combined with desperately searching for something he couldn't find was making him feel like he was in a fever dream.

Harry stared at a wall of condiments, making sure that he wasn't fucking missing something. He noticed the child peek out from under his blanket. He kicked his legs restlessly, as he had basically spent his whole day sitting in different carts. Harry frowned guiltily and petted the boy's hair. "I'm sorry, kid. We're almost done." The grocery store had been pretty empty today, and he looked around the aisle to make sure nobody was in sight. "You wanna run up and down the aisle real quick?"

David grinned excitedly at that idea as he nodded, and he raised his arms to be lifted from the cart. Harry set him down before watching him run to one end before sprinting past him to reach the other. Just throughout the day, Harry was pleased to see how comfortable the kid was getting in public spaces.

He gazed back towards the condiments before he heard a yelp that made the fur on his back instantly stand on end. An older woman had appeared and gotten a hold of David's arm, and she was trying to hush the whimpering child while saying, "Come on, let's find your parents."

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Harry couldn't help how threatening he sounded as he strode up to the stranger that wouldn't let go of the shaking kid.

David tried running towards Harry, but the woman had a tight grip on his wrist. She gave Harry a dirty look and said, "You stay out of this. I'm helping this poor child."

He couldn't believe this was happening. David looked terrified, and every passing second this kid was going to get more traumatized. Harry pushed down his frustration, knowing that the best thing to do was deescalate the situation. "The kid's with me," he said as calmly as possible. He reached out to prove it. "Come here, David. It's okay."

David once again tried moving, but he only struggled against the stranger's grip. She didn't break eye contact with Harry as she said, "You know what I think? I've been watching you for the past few minutes, and I've seen how you've been hiding him with that blanket. You're afraid people will recognize him because you've taken him, but in his one chance to flee he runs straight to me!"

She yanked the kid's arm up to show off his bandages, who whimpered from the feeling. "Don't think I didn't notice this!" she stated sharply as she gestured to the wounds. "And on top of all of that, you look nothing like him! In no world is he your child."

"I'm his foster parent." Harry could hear the slight rage in his own voice. It wasn't fair that he had to act so rationally towards this hysterical behavior. But it definitely wasn't the first time he'd been in a situation like this. Though the addition of David made it infinitely harder to treat the person that was traumatizing the kid with any ounce of respect. "He likes to hide under the blanket because he's afraid of strangers. Now please let go of my child, you're hurting him."

The woman laughed harshly. “Who would let somebody like you foster a child? I want to see some proof in documentation.”

“I don’t have the papers on me at all times!” Harry’s rage had hit a point where it was impossible to completely hide. He felt a wave of fury pulse through him as he exclaimed, “Just let go of the kid!”

Both the woman and David flinched from how loud and angry the monster sounded. The stranger dragged David closer to her as she smiled triumphantly. “Looks like an employee is coming to take care of this,” she said smugly. “I suggest you do what he says before the authorities show up.”

Harry’s shoulders tensed up as he felt panic swarm around in his stomach. He realized that if things kept escalating, he would lose the chance to ever see David again. He sure enough heard someone approach from behind and turned to see the store employee stand next to him.

It was his neighbor, Robin. Robin wore a work vest and name tag to prove his role as an employee. Harry froze at the sight of him, now having no idea how this was going to play out.

Robin looked at the woman irritably and said, “Mam, let go of the child.”

She stared back at the bird in shock. “Don’t you realize what’s happening?” She gestured to Harry. “This monster-”

“Is the kid’s foster parent,” Robin interrupted. “Yes, I heard.”

She huffed angrily. “There’s no proof of that!”

A few of the bird’s feathers bristled. “You can’t just take someone’s child because they don’t have the paperwork currently on them that proves they’re the guardian. Why don’t we let the kid speak for himself, alright?”

The woman looked at the trembling kid while she loosened her grip. “Well, he’s obviously not going to-”

As soon as David was able to break free, he dashed into Harry to give him a hug. He lifted his arms and looked up with terrified eyes, wanting nothing else but to be held again. Harry instinctively picked up the boy and held him close. David rested his head on the monster’s shoulder and hid his face away from the two strangers.

As Harry did his best to soothe the child, Robin raised his eyebrows and smiled smugly at the stranger. “Have a nice day.”

The woman glared at how this went down with disgust and shock before she stormed away. Robin then finally made eye contact with Harry, who now stood awkwardly as he tried to calm the whimpering child.

Robin’s smile faded and he said plainly, “You didn’t tell me that you had a kid.”

Harry darted his eyes away. “This is pretty recent.”

The bird sighed and as he turned to walk away, Harry hastily asked, “Can you show me where the peanut butter is?”

Robin glared back at him. “Are you stupid?” When Harry didn’t reply, he groaned and said, “This way.”

He pushed the cart for Harry, who had to keep holding the child that wouldn’t let go of him. As Robin led the way, he said, “I spotted you on the security cameras in the break room. You shouldn’t have let your kid run around like that.”

Harry lowered his head a bit in shame. “I won’t make that mistake again,” he stated softly.

They got to where the peanut butter was. “Peanut butter is a food, not a condiment, idiot,” Robin explained. He put a jar in the cart and turned back to Harry. He looked the monster up and down before he asked, “What’s wrong with you?”

Harry realized that he was slouching his posture and he was also slightly shaking with nerves. He supposed he looked a lot more shaken than he was trying to let on. Someone had just hurt and practically taken David away from him, and he was helpless to do anything about it. He had failed to keep David safe. It had only been a day and he failed.

“Hey!” Robin snapped his fingers to get Harry out of his panic-fueled trance. “Don’t ignore me!”

He blinked out of it and gazed back at Robin. “I um… am really new to this… parenting thing,” he explained as he forced himself to keep it together.

Robin scoffed and crossed his arms. “Yeah, no kidding.” When Harry just continued to look uncomfortable, his expression softened and he said, “You must be doing something right. The kid loves you.” He gestured to David in his arms.

He felt a warmth in his heart from that. The hugs had implied it, but it was weird hearing it said out loud, from his irritable neighbor nonetheless.

David had stopped whimpering and shaking and he turned in Harry’s arms to look at the bird. He smiled and reached out his hand towards Robin.

Robin glared at his hand. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Harry chuckled. “I think he might like you too, mate.”

He narrowed his eyes and took a step closer, which allowed David to pet the top of his head. Robin gasped astonishedly and the kid giggled from his reaction. “You can’t just pet me!” the bird exclaimed. “Do I look like a pet to you?”

David continued to laugh gleefully as he took his hand away and clung to Harry, who also grinned from the interaction. Robin grumbled as he brushed his hands through his feathers, making sure nothing had been messed up.

“Alright,” Robin said as the laughing died down. “I hope that was worth it.” He glared at the two creatures, who did look a lot better than a few seconds ago. He glanced away before he said to Harry, “You know, I am available tomorrow morning, if you want help getting started as a foster parent.”

When Harry looked back at him hesitantly, he added, “I have like seven nephews, I know more than you think.”

Harry tilted his head in surprise before he said, “That would be great, thanks.”

Robin nodded in response as he had a contemplative look on his face. Then he grabbed the cart and said, “Come on, I’ll help you get checked-out.”

With that, Harry was finally able to end his shopping day.

—

That evening, Harry made a pot of spaghetti while David drew at the kitchen table. He hummed a tune to himself as he scribbled crayons onto paper. David now wore clothes that fit him better and his hair was still a bit damp from a bath. All of his wounds had stopped bleeding, so he didn’t need to wear bandages anymore. Only scars and bruises were visible on his skin, which would hopefully fade with time.

“What are you singing?” Harry asked casually as David continued to hum.

David stopped humming and instead got up from his seat to show the monster a picture he had drawn. Harry stopped stirring the pasta to see the drawing of a red hairy creature.

Harry took the picture and smiled. “Is that me?”

The boy grinned as he nodded enthusiastically. He jumped in place excitedly and Harry couldn’t help but appreciate the energy this kid was quickly developing.

He gazed back at the picture with a sense of pride. “This is really good,” he remarked. “Do you want to put it on the fridge?”

David once again started stimming from the idea. “Yeah!”

Harry chuckled and used a magnet to stick the picture to the fridge. He glanced at a few other drawings still lying on the table. “Do you want to put those up too?”

The child nodded and together they put up some drawings of flowers and houses. Harry picked up the final drawing and frowned in confusion. In contrast to the other colorful drawings, this image only depicted a simple notepad. He supposed it wasn’t a strange thing to draw, but for some reason the image unsettled him a bit. He turned the paper over and noticed some frantic scribbles on the back.

He glanced over to make sure that David wasn’t looking before he quickly crumpled the paper and put it in the bin. If someone had asked him why he did that he wouldn't be able to answer them. He just had a weird instinct about it. David was busy looking up at his collection of art pieces in awe, forgetting that he had missed a final drawing.

Chapter 4 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/130599952)

“Where the hell is he?” He opened the hall closet to find it deserted. Harry shut the door and pressed his forehead against it in defeat. He scoured his thoughts for a place he could have missed.

The first thing Harry did when he woke up that morning was check on the guest room that was now David’s room. That was when he found his bed empty. Now Harry was spending the past few minutes frantically searching the house.

He flinched when he heard a knock at the front door. He hurried to open it to find his neighbor standing there with a hesitant look on his face. His expression sharpened when he saw how distressed Harry looked. “Oh, god. What is it, now?”

“David’s missing.” He couldn’t hide the fear in his voice if he tried. “I haven’t seen him at all since I put him to bed last night. I’ve been searching all over the house and I can’t find him!”

Robin sighed as he pushed past Harry to step inside. “He’s in here somewhere,” he tried to say assuringly. “I bet I’ll find him first. I’m very good at hide and seek.”

“This isn’t a game.”

“Not with that attitude, it isn’t.” Robin headed upstairs without a second thought, leaving Harry behind.

There was a bathroom upstairs that Robin looked around, checking behind the shower curtain and in the cabinets under the sink. He then moved to the next room, which did seem to be a plain guest room hastily turned into a kid’s room with the addition of a night light and stuffed animals. He immediately crouched down to check under the bed.

Of course, Harry hadn’t checked under the kid’s bed. Robin had too much experience with kids not to check a hiding spot so obvious. Sure enough, he saw David a few feet away from him, lying on his stomach beneath the bed. He scooted a bit away from Robin when he saw him.

Robin sat up and rested his back against the wall. “Game’s over, kid, I found you. Why don’t we play a different game instead?”

He knew by the expression on the kid's face that he was hiding because he was scared, and by his movement he seemed to be scared of Robin at the moment too. Robin couldn't see the kid from where he was currently sitting, but he pulled the card game out of the pocket of his jacket to make the situation feel more normal. He started shuffling the cards casually. "Have you ever played Go Fish?"

There was no response from beneath the bed. He shrugged and said, "It's pretty simple. I'm sure you'll get it."

He laid out all of the cards between himself and the bed, hoping that the game would entice David. Robin then sat against the wall again and held his cards, watching the pile of cards across from him to see if the kid would go for those.

Sure enough, David did crawl his way up to pick up the pile of cards closest to him. He continued to lay on his stomach, and kept half of his body still under the bed as he propped himself up on his elbows to gaze at his cards.

Robin briefly explained the rules and for a few moments, they were calmly playing Go Fish together. After a few rounds of drawing cards and making matches, Robin asked, "Why are you hiding under the bed?"

David appeared calmer as he played the game, but that question made him glance away nervously. "They tried to drown me in oil," he said softly.

His stomach twisted at that statement. "Who?"

The kid didn't seem to hear him. He just kept staring into nowhere with a nervous look. Robin tried to break him out of it by asking, "Got any four's?"

David blinked back into reality and shook his head. "Go fish."

As Robin drew another card, Harry entered the room. He stood there in shock as he stared at the apparent game that was happening on the floor. After he shook his head, he crouched down and reached a hand out towards David. "David, I've been looking all over for you," he said in a voice that sounded both anxious and exhausted. "Come on, you need to eat breakfast."

David flinched away from the hand and remained where he was, half beneath the bed. Harry pulled his hand back with a hurt look in his eyes.

As he watched this play out, Robin quickly asked, "Would you like to play Go Fish with us?"

David went from looking scared to looking excited by the idea. He smiled and showed his cards to Harry, as if to prove how fun the game was.

Harry sighed and sat on the floor by Robin. "Yeah, okay. Deal me in."

Robin reset the game so that the three of them could play together. Once the game began, they all kept their focus to the cards, not daring to talk about anything else. As the game progressed, Harry struggled more to make matches.

"You've gotta have some two's, Robin," Harry pleaded.

He shook his head smugly. "Go fish, you dimwit."

Harry groaned irritably while he took another card. David giggled as he watched the in-game drama play out before him.

When they finished another round, Harry hesitated before he said, "David, you really do need to eat breakfast. Remember what the doctor said? We gotta stick to three meals a day, and we don't want breakfast so close to lunch."

David tensed up as he remained partly beneath the bed, still looking too anxious to leave his hiding place.

"Breakfast sounds great right now," Robin said encouragingly. "And afterwards, we can play a new game."

The kid's eyes lit up at that last statement. "You have more games?"

"Yes, we haven't even played my favorite one yet. But I want to have breakfast first."

"Okay, we'll eat, then play a new game." David got up from underneath the bed as he nodded to himself.

"I bet I can get to the kitchen first," Robin said with a grin.

David gasped at that before he sprinted from the room and down the stairs. Robin scrambled to hastily follow him, with Harry having no option but to lag behind. If Robin had been racing one of his nephews, he would have been far more aggressive. But he let the kid win this time under unique circumstances.

David laughed as he watched the bird dramatically throw himself into his seat after coming in second. Harry walked a bit quicker than usual only to make sure that the boy was alright, and his shoulders dropped with relief as he saw both of them sitting at the table.

Robin instantly pointed at the monster and declared, "At least I beat you, you big loser!"

Harry shook his head as he started getting cereal for everyone. "I wasn't even playing."

"You were, and you lost!" He crossed his arms as he concluded his argument.

David giggled again, forcing Harry to sigh and just go with it.

—

That afternoon, it was time for David to take a nap and for Robin to go home. David gave the bird a quick hug before he clung to Harry, who carried him to bed. Robin waited by the front door until Harry returned after putting the kid to bed.

"Hey," Harry said softly so that David couldn't hear them, "thanks for helping out today."

Robin shrugged. “It wasn’t that difficult.” He grinned as he added, “The kids can’t get enough of me, as you can tell.”

“Yes, David seems to enjoy your antics much more than I do.” Harry crossed his arms as if he were annoyed, but Robin suspected that the monster was slightly smiling beneath his fur. Maybe he was looking into things too much.

The bird suddenly shot his eyes away as he realized he had been looking at Harry for too long. Now he felt the strong urge to leave before he embarrassed himself again. But he remembered he needed to tell Harry something before he could flee.

“Um, before I go, I did want to tell you something that David told me, in case it means something.” Robin fidgeted anxiously before he said, “When I was playing David at cards, I did ask him why he was hiding beneath the bed, and he told me that someone had tried to drown him in oil.”

Harry stiffened at that. “Did he say who?”

Robin shook his head. “He wouldn’t say any more after that.” He looked at Harry hesitantly and asked, “It was probably just a nightmare, right?”

The monster thought to himself and Robin could see his stance get more anxious. Finally, he said quietly, “I’m scared, Robin.”

Harry had warned him beforehand that David was most likely coming from an abusive household. He knew the situation that he was in was legitimately nerve-wracking, and at the moment, they were helpless to figure out what was really going on.

Robin dared to hold Harry’s hand for a moment, just to assure him. “You’re doing all you can. And if you need more help, I can do this again.”

The two of them both looked at their hands before they pulled away at the same time. Robin felt himself get warm beneath his feathers and he hastily pulled the front door open. “Anyway, I’ll see you later, loser.”

Harry chuckled at that. “We’ll see who’s the loser next time.” Then he shut the door behind Robin.

Robin stood alone once again on Harry’s front steps, taking in the afternoon sunshine and the occasional breeze that brushed his feathers. He grimaced and gazed downward, feeling like he was being too sappy. Robin wasn’t used to being this outwardly emotional. He felt gross.

A butterfly swept over the green grass and fluttered on by, displaying its vibrant colors. Robin swatted at it with disgust. “Pesky bee.” He continued to grumble to himself as he made his way home.

Chapter 5 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/134829445)

Notes:

So sorry for the delay! I am planning on finishing this work.

Rain hammered on the roof late into the night. Harry lied awake in bed, listening to the relentless downpour while fidgeting with his sheets. It had now been a few days since he welcomed David into his home. There were still mornings where the kid was too afraid to come out from underneath his bed, and Harry would help lighten things by playing games or drawing with the kid on the floor. Eventually David would feel better and be able to leave his room, and his mood seemed to always improve throughout the day. David was always the most shaken in the early morning, and Harry suspected that had to do with nightmares.

Now Harry lied awake in the middle of the night, feeling guilty about what David must be dreaming of now. There wasn’t a morning where the boy wasn’t deeply shaken, and all that Harry could learn about it were disturbing details. From what he could tell, David’s dreams were only about being tortured by different monsters.

He didn’t know what he could do to prevent these night terrors. Harry read a lighthearted story to the kid every night, and David would give him the longest lasting hug before he had to go to sleep. But every morning David was shaken and even scared that Harry might hurt him. It was like each morning was an unavoidable reset, and Harry had no ability to change it.

A sound of thunder suddenly erupted and broke Harry out of his thoughts. The thunder rumbled noisily, sounding alarmingly close. Harry turned over in bed in an attempt to muffle the noise in one ear.

Another boom of thunder sounded before he heard a door down the hall creek open. Harry sat up in bed to sure enough watch as David slowly entered his room.

Harry turned on the lamp by his bed to see the kid nervously fidget with his pajamas as he hesitantly stepped towards the monster’s bed. Harry tried to smile warmly and said, “It’s okay, kid. You can come here, if you’d like.” He opened up his arms in an attempt to be more welcoming.

David hesitated before he bolted for the monster, jumping up onto the bed and clinging onto Harry in a tight hug. He grunted in surprise as he was basically tackled by the kid, and he felt warmth fill his heart as he gently hugged David back.

He noticed David's eyes droop tiredly, but he would still flinch at any sound of thunder from outside. "Have you slept at all yet?" he asked David.

The kid shook his head in response, not loosening his grip on Harry. He supposed it made sense, since the kid never wanted physical contact right after his nightmares. He was a little bit thankful that David hadn't fallen asleep yet, since it was easier to comfort him if he didn't have recent dreams.

Harry looked down at David again and noticed how exhausted the poor kid looked, but he refused to close his eyes as the storm raged on. Harry tried to comfort him by saying, "You can sleep with me, if that'll help. I promise you're safe from the storm."

David shook his head again. "I can't sleep," he muttered. His grip on Harry's fur tightened as he added, "They'll get me again." He looked up at Harry with pleading eyes.

He felt a pang in his heart, not knowing how to fix this but feeling guilt for not being able to fix it anyway. "Who?"

"I have these friends in my brain. They helped me in the past, but now they hurt me."

He processed that for a moment. As little as the kid said, it made Harry feel sick to his core. "I know it's hard to believe it, but they are just nightmares," he tried to say as convincingly as possible. "Nothing's going to hurt you. At least, not anymore. Alright?"

David looked down hesitantly and nodded. They listened to the storm until Harry fell asleep.

—

Harry sighed as he picked up the phone and dialed for his neighbor. "You off work today?"

"Yeah?"

"David needs you again to play house."

He heard Robin scoff. "Fine, but only if I don't have to be a stupid dog again."

Harry chuckled. "I'll see what I can do."

Robin hung up, quickly stopping by the mirror to smooth out his feathers. He then threw on his jacket to head to his neighbor's house. By the time he was knocking on Harry's door, he realized how little time had passed since they hung up. He was acting too eager. His feathers anxiously bristled and he did his best to smooth them down again.

Harry welcomed him inside and he was immediately tackled by a hug from David. Robin grinned in surprise, relieved to find that the kid was doing better this morning than in the past.

David then pulled his hand and exclaimed, "Come on! We're playing house." He led Robin to the living room. "This is where you live. We're neighbors." He gestured for Harry to join in. "And you two live together! You're raising Mr. Whiskers." He carefully handed Robin the cat stuffed animal as if it were a real baby.

Robin stared down at the stuffed animal. "Am I the dad?"

"Well if anyone's the dad, it's me," Harry immediately asserted.

"What!?" Robin glared up at him in disbelief. "I have what it takes to be very fatherly, I'll have you know!"

David rocked back and forth impatiently. "You two can figure it out. I'm your neighbor, so I live upstairs." He hurried up the stairs and yelled down at them, "You better take good care of Mr. Whiskers!" Then he went into his bedroom and shut the door.

The two of them waited around hesitantly before Harry said, "David has coloring books in his room, he'll be fine. I guess we just need to hold on to Mr. Whiskers."

They decided to sit on the couch together with the stuffed animal sitting between them. After another awkward pause, Robin commented, "David seems to be doing better today."

"Yeah, he slept in my bed last night because of the storm, and this morning he was actually in a decent mood." Harry's shoulders tensed up before he added, "He told me that his imaginary friends didn't bother him last night."

Robin stared at him in confusion and he sighed. "David says that he always had these friends in his head that used to comfort him before they started torturing him in his dreams. That's why he struggles a lot in the morning."

Robin thought to himself for a moment. "It's probably fueled by trauma."

He took a deep breath. "David is meeting with the psychologist tomorrow. I feel like no matter what's going on, I'm not good enough to raise this kid."

Robin noticed him anxiously fidgeting with his hands and he offered up his own hand instinctively. Harry paused for a moment before he took it. He could feel the monster's stress in the tension of his grip and Robin squeezed back affirmingly.

"You're doing a good job," Robin assured. "You were there when that kid needed you most. It might not feel like it, but I can tell that kid's doing better each day. And while I might have experience with kids, you're a real natural. I love seeing how positive of an impact you're putting on David's life."

Robin immediately started blushing after he spoke, feeling like he rambled on for too long. He hoped Harry couldn't notice.

Harry's expression subtly changed, though it was difficult to tell what it changed to beneath the fur. "Thanks for doing all of this," he said softly. "I should be paying you."

He shook his head. "It's nothing. I like coming here." Robin glanced down and noticed that they were still holding hands. "I like spending time with you."

He felt Harry squeeze his hand a bit tenderly. "I do too."

They both hesitated for a moment and Robin suddenly realized why he felt so anxious about coming over.

"I'm coming for a neighborly visit!"

They both jerked away from each other as they heard David announce himself as he hurried back down the stairs. Robin hastily stood with Mr. Whiskers cradled in his arms and he smiled nervously, sweating beneath his feathers. Harry stood next to him and greeted David, pretending like nothing had just happened.

—

When Robin got home that evening, he couldn't stop smiling. He also couldn't believe how quickly things were changing. How suddenly he looked forward to the phone ringing. How less disgusted he felt about the world around him. How he now had this feeling of hope in his chest that he couldn't get rid of if he tried.

The bright blue sky over the cheerful little town didn't annoy him as much anymore. It was as if recent changes in life adjusted the filter over his eyes. Instead of grumbling on his way home from work, he was daydreaming about his next day off.

He felt a pang in his stomach as he remembered what Harry and David were going to do tomorrow. They were going to the psychologist, where they were going to assess David and give the next best steps moving forward. He remembered the tension he felt when holding Harry's hand, and he realized he could do something to help. Robin picked up the phone and dialed.

When Harry answered, he asked, "Would you like me to come with you tomorrow?"

Chapter 6 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/136823836)

The next morning was particularly difficult. Harry woke up to the sound of David crying out from down the hall. He hurried to the kid's room only for a book to be thrown at him. He shut the door before he could be hit.

"David?" he asked through the closed door. All that he could hear on the other side was weeping and panicked breathing.

He listened to the sounds of David struggling, not knowing what to do. He didn't want to call Robin, since the bird already promised to join them going to the psychiatrist today. He didn't want to overload his neighbor with this stuff. He especially didn't want Robin to get sick of having to help him.

After a moment of pacing in front of David's door nervously, the sounds of David crying died down a bit and sounded more somber than panicked. He knocked on the door hesitantly. "Hey, kid. It's just me. Can I come in?"

When he heard no reply, he dared to open the door. David was under his blanket, and he peaked out from underneath his protective shield. His eyes were red and Harry could see tear streaks on the poor kid's face. "Did they get to you again?" Harry asked.

David nodded in response. He pulled at his blanket frantically. "I can still hear them in the walls," he whispered. He glanced around nervously, making sure no one else was there.

Harry's shoulders tensed anxiously. He tried to think of times when he was most upset or in panic, and what would help. He knew what it was like to feel trapped and confined in indoor spaces, especially because he was larger than average. His appearance also stood out and he would feel a pit in his stomach when people stared at him. He was most relaxed sitting alone outside, with no walls to trap him. He could exist entirely on his own outside of physical and social boundaries he had to face daily.

If David's torturers were living in the walls of his home, he would get the kid out. "How about we go and leave them here?" Harry asked. "Is it okay if I pick you up?"

David nodded again and he picked up the kid while being sure he still had his blanket to protect him. They headed down the stairs together to exit the home.

He carried David, who remained hidden in his blanket, down the neighborhood street under the pale morning sky. People walking and driving to their commute expectantly glanced and stared at them, entirely confused and disturbed by what they were seeing. Harry took in a deep breath and did his best to pay no mind to them. He was a stranger in this world, and now with David they were just a strange duo. Nobody needed to understand them.

They reached the nearby park that Harry often visited. A bench sat beneath a large shady tree that overlooked a clear grassy area with a stream running in the distance. It was spring, and various wildflowers were blooming everywhere. Harry sat on the bench with David still in his arms and took in the view of dawn at the park.

David eventually took the blanket off his head to fully sense where he was. The kid's breathing slowed as he took in his surroundings. After a while of them sitting in silence, David said with a grin, "This is so pretty."

The kid turned to face Harry directly. "I saw on the TV some people having a picnic at the park. Can we have one please?"

Harry smiled from the idea. "Yeah, we can totally do that soon."

"Yay!" David giggled excitedly and seemed completely delighted, as if he wasn't having a breakdown moments ago. "Can we bring my new friends?"

He knew David was talking about his stuffed animals. "Sure, just don't bring any of the friends that have hurt you."

"They won't come," David promised. "They don't go outside."

—

The walls were blue and covered in colorful art. There was a vibrant play area with an assortment of toys, a mini slide, and even a rainbow tube that David got to crawl through. Now David was drawing at a table while Robin watched. Robin found that he felt very relaxed in a room like this, a space only geared towards childhood enjoyment. It felt nostalgic for him to sit at a table made for children surrounded by a colorful play area. He had forgotten that foam puzzle mats were a thing before he got here.

Harry was speaking to the psychiatrist first in a different room while Robin and David waited in the makeshift lobby and play space. Robin rested his head against his hand as he grew more tired from waiting. He was watching David draw characters with crayons. When he gazed at David's face, he straightened his posture as he realized something.

David's eyes seemed foggy and disconnected as he continued to draw on the paper mindlessly. His dull expression felt somber to Robin.

"What are you drawing?" Robin asked, trying to get the kid out of his own head.

David blinked and stared down at the drawing as if he were processing it for the first time. Then he stated softly, "My past friends." He gazed around anxiously, as if the space they were in was unnerving.

Robin gazed down at the friends he had drawn. "They seem nice." When he noticed that David still looked unnerved, he narrowed his eyes and asked, "What, do you not like it here?"

He shook his head in response. "I don't get it," he murmured.

It hurt Robin before to see how scared David sometimes looked in Harry's home, but this somehow bothered him more to see David so disturbed in a place specifically made for childhood enjoyment and comfort.

He noticed David anxiously fidgeting with the crayons as he glanced around, and Robin asked another question to help guide his focus. "Can you tell me about your friends?"

David let out a stressed breath as he gazed back at his characters. After some hesitation, he pointed to one and said, "This one's very creative."

—

Harry sat on the couch by himself facing the psychiatrist, telling her about all of the days he had spent with David and the struggles they faced together.

"What hurts is that some mornings David still seems scared of me. And I know it's because of his dreams, but it still hurts to see him look that way at me after what we've been through."

The doctor wrote down a note then asked, "Do you think he'd be better off with a different foster parent?"

He let out a tensed breath. "I don't know. Through all the struggles, we've bonded a lot by this point. It'd be hard for me to let go of him, but I will if that's the best move. I just want what's best for David."

"It sounds like you're doing everything you can," she said with a slight encouraging smile. "This will just take a lot of time. And because his case is so severe, he might need to live with foster parents that are more experienced."

After glancing at her notes again, the doctor looked up and asked, "Are you ready for David to join us?"

Harry nodded while gripping his own hands anxiously. He was trying to mentally prepare himself to let David go.

—

Harry and Robin sat on the couch with David between them. The doctor who sat facing all of them looked to David and asked, "How has it been living with Harry?"

David blinked and shook his head a bit as if to keep himself from zoning out. "Good," he said softly. He fidgeted with his clothes and added, "And it's fun when Robin comes over."

Harry noticed Robin turn his head a bit to hide a smile. He couldn't help but adore Robin's response. He couldn't believe this was still the same neighbor that occasionally tried to start fights with him. Even with the antics that Robin still performed now, Harry was starting to see a different side to him underneath all of that.

After a few more simple questions about David's new living situation, the doctor said, "Now I'm going to ask some more serious questions, and if any of them are too difficult to answer, just let me know. You don't need to worry about anything here. This is a safe space, and we're all going to help you no matter what you say or do. Just answer the best you can, and let us know if you need anything from us."

David nodded hesitantly and kept fidgeting with his clothes. Harry made a mental note to himself that he should get David some toys that he could fidget with.

"I heard that many mornings you're scared to leave bed. Is it because you find Harry frightening?" the doctor asked.

"What kind of question is that!?" Robin shot up from his seat in rage. "Harry's done everything for this kid! Don't you dare gaslight him into thinking Harry's a monster!"

"Robin, it's fine." Harry reached over to pull Robin's arm so he could sit back down. Robin did so while grumbling angrily.

David appeared startled from the question and Robin's reaction, and he scooted closer to Harry so that he could hold on to him for comfort. "It's not Harry's fault," David pleaded somberly. "It's all in my head. I want to stay with Harry."

"What's all in your head?"

David's grip on Harry tightened and he glanced around nervously. Harry tried to calm the kid down by gently petting his head. "It's okay. We're here to help."

David took a deep breath before he said quietly, "When I lived with dad, the friends in my brain comforted me, especially after he hurt me." He bit his lip then added, "I wasn't allowed outside, so they lived in the walls with me."

Harry felt a deep sense of anger and sorrow boil up inside him. This was the first time he was hearing about David's past, and while he figured it was bad, it was damaging to hear those words. He did his best to calm his instinctive emotions so that David could continue to feel safe.

David choked on a cry and pushed his face into Harry's side for a moment. The adults waited hesitantly before David made his face visible again, not daring to make eye contact with anyone. He continued talking in a slightly hoarse voice. "They followed me into the walls of my new home. That's when they started punishing me for leaving. They torture me at night, a lot like he did." He took another moment to wipe tears from his face.

"They won't even leave me alone during certain times of the day. They don't listen to me when I say I can't go back. And sometimes I'm scared of real people like Harry because it's hard to tell what's real and what isn't."

The doctor processed all of that and wrote many notes before she said, "So when the real world wasn't safe, you used your imagination as a safe place. But now it seems like your imagination is working against you."

"My new friends that Harry got me like Mr. Whiskers have been nice to me, though." He looked up to Harry and Robin. "They've been doing a good job taking care of him." He smiled and Harry couldn't help but smile back as he wiped some more tears from David's face.

—

After some more questions, David got to leave the room and wait in the lobby again with Robin. Harry stayed behind to keep talking with the psychiatrist.

"You and Robin need to keep playing with David, because that seems to be helping him a lot," the doctor told him. "Make sure that any activities around imagination and play are safe and fun for him. We are going to do a full assessment for schizophrenia in the future, but it sounds like that's what he has. After the assessment we'll be putting him on some medications and he needs to be in therapy regularly, and from how much he loves to draw I think he would really enjoy art therapy."

The psychiatrist handed him some papers and added, "He's going to need some friends his age in the near future, too. Those documents have contacts for other foster parents that you can schedule play dates with, and we hope in the fall he'll be ready to start first or second grade."

The doctor leaned forward in her seat. "I can tell that you and David share a strong connection, and from what I've learned today it is helping him through a lot. I have more parenting resources for you, and resources that go over raising kids with trauma, as well kids who are schizophrenic and neurodivergent. And we'll keep helping you through every step, as well as making sure that David receives the treatment he needs. I guess what I'm getting at is that you are a good fit for David as a foster parent. Have you considered adoption at all yet?"

Harry blinked, trying to process that last question. He had been trying to prepare himself to let David go, and now he was faced with the possibility of adoption. "To be honest, no," Harry acknowledged. "I've just been focused on trying to help David, and I really haven't thought that well ahead into the future. But I, um," he found himself getting emotional and stumbling over his words, and he took a breath to get a hold of himself. "I would like to consider it now."

The psychiatrist smiled and nodded. "You and Robin have a lot to talk about. Is he your partner?"

Harry felt himself suddenly get extremely warm. "Um, no, but uh- it's complicated? He's definitely been a good partner in raising David, if you use the term partner that way." He chuckled awkwardly as his foot began tapping the floor

nervously. He wanted to hide his face with his papers in embarrassment. Now he was fantasizing being in a family with Robin and David. Since when did this become such a possibility?

The doctor chuckled at his response. “I understand,” she said shortly. “We’ll be giving you a call about your next appointment soon, alright?”

Harry nodded and thanked the psychiatrist before he left with his papers clutched tightly to his chest in an attempt to quiet down his beating heart. When he entered the lobby, he was immediately confronted by Robin.

“The kid says that he’s never had ice cream. Why haven’t you given him any ice cream?” Robin demanded.

Harry froze in shock. “It just wasn’t on my list,” he replied slowly.

“That’s it!” Robin pointed dramatically to the exit. “We’re going out for ice cream!” David cheered by his side and jumped around in excitement.

Harry couldn’t help but laugh. “Alright, mate. Ice cream it is.” The three of them then headed out of the play space together.

Chapter 7 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/138577954)

That evening Harry read another story to David before tucking him in for the night. As he headed to his own room, he heard the phone ring from downstairs. He rushed to the phone so that the ringing wouldn’t disturb David too much and answered.

“Hey.” Robin’s voice came through the other line.

“Hey. Thanks again for coming to the doctor’s today.”

“It was no problem,” Robin replied. “I enjoyed the ice cream afterwards especially.”

Harry chuckled from that.

Robin sighed before he said, “I’m just really bothered by what David told the doctor. It sickens me that his dad used to torture him like that.”

“Yeah, it’s been bothering me too.” Harry had been feeling sick with strong emotions after their visit to the doctor’s, now knowing that so much of the kid’s trauma was fueled by his own dad.

There was a pause before Robin said bluntly, “I want to kill him.”

Harry couldn’t help but smile a bit, happy to know that Robin was just as passionate about this as he was. “Me too.”

Another pause hung between them before Robin asked, “Is it okay if I come over? I really just wanna talk about all of this.”

“Yeah, that’s fine. David’s in bed, so we gotta be quiet.”

“Alright. Be there soon.”

They hung up and Harry noticed that he felt a little excited by the idea of Robin coming over at this time. He sighed to himself, wishing he wouldn’t get so excited over literally nothing. He straightened up the living room a bit before Robin got to the door.

He let Robin inside quietly and they sat together on the couch in front of the TV, which softly played.

Harry stiffened anxiously, not entirely sure what to say. “Would you like something to drink?”

“Yes, I’ll have a fruit punch, please and thank you.” Robin stared daggers into Harry, as if daring him to not have fruit punch, before he scoffed and said, “I’m just kidding. Water’s fine.”

Harry sighed and shook his head, but he couldn’t help but smile a bit as he did so. He got himself and Robin glasses of water and said, “It really means a lot how much you care about David. The kid’s lucky to have you.”

“He’s more lucky to have you,” Robin instantly replied. He set down his glass and looked at Harry hesitantly. His feathers were a bit bristled and he had a hard time making eye contact. “Um…” His voice flattered as he spoke, which Harry was not used to hearing. Robin was usually confident and snappy in his tone and mannerisms, but suddenly he was now looking uncertain and stumbling over his words. “I, um… it’s not just David I care about. I didn’t really expect any of this to happen but, uh, I think I care about you too.”

Robin instinctively covered his eyes and mumbled, “I don’t understand how things got like this, but I just want to be here all the time, with you, and see David grow up, but I never used to think about the future like this and I’m not really sure what’s happening, you must think I’m crazy I think I’m losing it too-”

Harry stopped his long rambling by gently reaching out to hold Robin’s hand. He also found it hard to make eye contact, and said as he gazed downward, “I don’t think any of that’s crazy. Those are nice things to fantasize about, and I’ve been sort of wanting the same thing. You really mean a lot to me, and um, I like you a lot.”

Robin was stunned still for a moment before he replied shortly, “I like you a lot, too.”

They finally both dared to make eye contact. Harry couldn’t even hear the TV anymore. He could only focus on what he wanted to say next. “We don’t have to rush into anything,” he said quietly, “but I do like the idea of us being a family.”

Robin smiled and said, “Maybe one day, it won’t be that crazy of an idea.”

—

It was a beautiful day at the park. Harry, Robin, and David enjoyed a picnic beneath the shade of a large tree while gazing at white puffy clouds and listening to the babbling brook.

It had been a few weeks since David’s first appointment with the psychiatrist, and things were really starting to pick up. David was now on meds to help with his mental health, and he was already showing progress with the mornings now being oddly calmer than usual. David had also been on a few playdates with other kids his age, and Harry and Robin were helping the kid catch up on some elementary basics every day so he could be ready for school by fall. Robin continued to spend a lot of time at Harry’s place, sometimes spending the night over. Harry noticed that whenever he and Robin held hands, David would glance at them and grin.

At the park, they were pointing out what shapes the clouds resembled while David played with his new fidget toy. Harry pointed to one cloud and said, “That one looks like a frog.”

Robin scoffed. “Typical interpretation.”

He glanced over at Robin. “What are you seeing, then?”

The bird narrowed his eyes before answering, “It’s obviously a dog with a baseball bat.”

Harry looked back to the cloud, not seeing that at all. “What?”

Robin shrugged. “I don’t know. I think I need glasses.” He paused before asking, “What do you see, David?”

When David didn’t respond, Harry and Robin both glanced towards him worriedly. David sat hunched over with his back to them, seemingly motionless. “David?” Harry asked. “Everything okay?”

David looked back to them and blinked. His expression was sorrowful and uncertain. “Sorry,” he said quietly. “I was thinking.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” Harry assured. “We just want to know if you’re feeling alright.”

David shook his head and looked downwards. “This picnic was great. I should be happy right now. But I’m scared he’s gonna come back, and I’m gonna lose all of this.”

“That’s never gonna happen,” Robin said confidently. His feathers bristled by even the idea of it happening.

David still looked uncertain, so Harry asked, “Do you want a hug?”

David nodded and got up to hug the monster tightly. Harry hugged back and said, “You’re not alone in being scared. Robin and I get scared too. That’s why we need each other, cause we can always help each other out through moments like these. We’re like a team, and we’re always gonna help each other out through this type of stuff.”

The kid gazed up at Harry and Robin. “I promise that when you get scared, I’ll give you hugs too.”

“Thanks, kid.” Robin ruffled David’s hair playfully. They went back to gazing up at clouds, and David pointed out that one looked like a new friend he had made on a playdate.

Harry took in a deep breath of the fresh spring air. Everything was going to be okay.

Chapter 8 (http://archiveofourown.org/works/51182947/chapters/139553224)

Notes:

(See the end of the chapter for notes (#chapter_8_endnotes) .)

The months went by and it was late summer before Harry knew it. He woke up one morning to David crawling on the bed and shaking him and Robin awake.

“Come on!” David was saying urgently. “It’s the first day of school!”

“Five more minutes,” Robin mumbled, still half asleep.

David stopped bouncing on the bed excitedly and lowered his head in disappointment. Robin opened an eye to see the kid’s reaction and sighed. He instantly slipped out of bed and started racing out of the bedroom, stumbling as his body wasn’t ready for it. “Gotcha!” Robin called over his shoulder.

David gasped and raced after him. Harry listened to them both racing down the stairs before he heard David cheer with victory. He smiled a bit and finally got out of bed.

—

“Did you sleep okay last night?” Harry asked as he and Robin made breakfast and David sat at the table.

David nodded enthusiastically. “Nobody’s been bothering me at all. And Mr. Whiskers always keeps a lookout.” He hesitated for a moment before asking, “Mr. Whiskers can come with me to school, right?”

“Of course, he can.” Harry said assuringly. He and Robin had already talked with David’s teacher about his needs, and even though Harry was still very nervous, he had to remember they were doing everything right.

“Your friends Andy and Tracey will also be there,” Robin added. They were two friends David had made on playdates, who would also be in David’s class.

David smiled at the mention of his friends, but he was still tapping his foot on the floor and fidgeting with his hands. Harry instinctively got one of David’s fidget toys and handed it to him. “It’s okay to be nervous,” Harry told him. “Everyone’s gonna be nervous on the first day.”

“But everyone else has been to school, right?” David asked as he frowned. “I’m behind all of them.”

“No, you’re not,” Robin stated. “We caught you up over the summer. And again, you’re very smart. I wouldn’t be surprised if you end up ahead of everyone else. And we did a runthrough of what school would be like last week, remember? It’s going to be just like that, but with more kids around.”

“What if when I’m there, I see the bad things in my head? Or what if I have another panic attack?”

“You just tell the teacher if you can,” Harry said. “She knows what to do. She’ll take you to a safe quiet place, and we’ll come get you as soon as we can.”

Harry’s shoulders tensed as he spoke. He was most likely more nervous than David was. But he couldn’t show it in front of the kid. He turned away from David to hide his own nervous fidgeting before he looked down to see David hugging his side. He smiled up at Harry encouragingly and said, “It’s okay.” Harry couldn’t help but tear up a bit as he smiled back.

“Ready for your meds?” Robin asked as he held the container of pills David had to take every morning. David nodded and sat next to Robin to take his meds with a glass of water. Robin took a vitamin pill at the same time, sharing this important daily routine together. Harry finished their plates and they all had breakfast.

—

The school was close for them to all walk there together. David would occasionally jump in front of their walking pace excitedly while gripping onto his backpack. When they arrived at the school, Harry and Robin walked him to his class to drop him off. They had purposefully arrived early, but there were already a few kids hanging around in the classroom.

Some of the kids gawked and stared at Harry, and he even heard the word “monster” whispered amongst one group. David instinctively held Harry’s hand to comfort him. He also kept his eyes towards the kids as if to prove to them that Harry was just like any other parent, and there was nothing to gawk at.

The kids averted their eyes and went back to what they were doing while the teacher walked up to welcome David to class. “Your desk has your name tag right over there,” she said as she motioned to a group of desks that Tracey was already sitting at. She waved to David excitedly, who grinned as he waved back.

David hesitantly turned to Harry and Robin, realizing that this was where they were parting. “We’ll pick you up right when school ends,” Robin said assuringly.

David nodded before giving both of them final tight hugs. Harry kneeled down for his hug and said softly, “I love you so much, kid.”

“Love you too.” David squeezed his fur, not wanting to let go. Harry didn’t want to let go either. He was worried about the kid beginning a new journey, and he wasn’t going to be there for him every step of the way. He gazed into David’s eyes. The kid had grown so much since when he first met him. David let go of his fur, and Harry suddenly had a strong feeling that he was ready for this.

Harry let go as well and David skipped over to sit with Tracey. They immediately started chatting excitedly. Harry and Robin left before the school got too busy, headed on the suburban streets towards home.

“It’s gonna be weird being home without David there,” Robin commented.

Harry thought for a moment before he asked, “Wanna go out for lunch?”

Robin made eye contact with him. “Are you asking me on a date?”

He laughed at that. “Yeah.”

Robin held his hand and smirked. “Always knew you had a crush on me.”

They continued on their way, headed into town under the summer blue sky.

Notes:

Thank you all so much for reading! <3

Close (#)